

Šipan – Leisure Island of Dubrovnik’s Aristocracy

„You invite me to your palace on the water, where all kinds of ships come ashore, where sirens celebrate you in their songs, luring you with their caresses into paradise...”

(Maroje Mažibradić, 1563.)



Picturesque village of Suđurađ

The biggest island of the Dubrovnik archipelago

In the vicinity of Dubrovnik lies a green cluster of scattered islands, islets and rocks, the archipelago of the Elaphiti Islands. The largest among these 13 islands is the island of Šipan. Nature endowed the island with a mild climate, crystal clear seas and lush Mediterranean vegetation, which made it a perfect oasis for retreat from the hustle and bustle of life in the city. Within a short boat ride from Dubrovnik, it was still close enough to the town for running a business and yet far enough away to provide some much needed peace, which made it an ideal out-of-town residence. With its quiet bays, beaches, cypress trees, groves of citrus and olive trees the island was already inhabited

in ancient times. Proof of that are the ruins of Roman villa Rustica that can be seen in the Port of Šipan.



The Elaphiti Archipelago

Rich cultural heritage

For its beauty and picturesque countryside the island of Šipan soon became a favourite leisure destination of the Dubrovnik aristocracy. During the golden age of the Republic of Dubrovnik, noble families built 32 churches and 44 villas with beautiful gardens.

The nobility of Dubrovnik used their Renaissance villas to recharge their batteries from everyday life in the city. Sometimes these manors were also used as places for retreat from contagious towns during the outbreaks of deadly pandemics. The aristocracy built their villas near fertile fields and the owners were always there at farming time. The idea behind the Renaissance manors arises from the unity of country life and agriculture. Each villa provided a rural life, but also a place for delight and leisure.

The archbishop of Dubrovnik, Ludovico Beccadelli, a writer and humanist, also had a summer residence on the island of Šipan, and the ruins can still be seen today. In 1556 he

invited his very good friend Michelangelo Buonarroti to visit him at his villa, but his age prevented him from coming.



Church of St. Mary from the 14th century Polyptych of the Assumption of St. Mary

Guinness World Record of olive trees

At the peak of its power, the island of Šipán was full of life and it had 7,000 inhabitants, while today's island counts merely 450 permanent citizens. The islanders were mostly fishermen and farmers that attended to the needs of residents of manors. Thanks to the fertile fields covered by vineyards, figs, citrus and olive groves the island was called "the golden island". An interesting fact about Šipán is that it holds the Guinness World Record as the island with the largest number of olive trees compared to its size and the number of inhabitants. This is due to the tradition of the Republic of Dubrovnik, according to which an islander could get married only after planting a certain number of olive trees.

Pirates attack golden island

The island of Šipán has held on to the spirit of the past and it seems like here the time has stopped. On the first sight at the picturesque village of Suđurađ, one might think that you travelled back in time. The village is dominated by two large fortification towers that once stood against frequent pirates attacks. Towers had the entry on the first floor and

were connected to the mansion by a drawbridge. From there spears have been pointed towards the invaders and hot olive oil was spilt upon them.



Renaissance manor of Skočibuha family from the 16th century

Just a few steps away from the Skočibuha manors, there is a villa of Getaldić family. This villa is the oldest preserved Renaissance villa in the history of the Republic of Dubrovnik. It still stands proudly today as a reminder of glorious times when Dubrovnik was one of the wealthiest states of its time.